

My name is Ron Wells and I own a farm in Hood River County. We grow tree fruit, primarily pears and employ 2-3 workers on a seasonal basis. The same employees return to my farm year after year. I want to share with you my concerns about the real impact of HB 2358 on both my farm and my employees, which is scheduled for a public hearing in the House Business and Labor Committee on March 29th.

HB 2358 would require every farm and ranch in Oregon to pay overtime to employees after 40 hours of work, with no exceptions or consideration of peak season. This is the most aggressive overtime policy in the country, which would be devastating for local farmers and our employees.

Agriculture is experiencing a serious workforce shortage, and I already do a lot to compensate my employees for their hard work.

For example, voluntarily pay a minimum of \$15 per hour, even though it has not been adopted as the federal minimum wage.

I want to do everything I can to keep my employees happy and coming back to my farm, but as a farmer, I am a price taker. This means that I cannot simply increase the sale price of my crops to account for added labor costs. Consumers set our prices and will buy from other states or countries that sell at a cheaper price. I will have to absorb any added overhead. That's the economic reality I deal with every day.

I will not be able to afford the added payroll costs proposed in HB 2358. To stay in business, I will be forced to limit the number of hours worked by my employees to 40 hours in a week to avoid the added expense of overtime pay. I do not want to do this, and my employees do not want me to do this, but that is the practical reality of this bill.

Farmers and ranchers will have to mechanize operations, transition to less labor-intensive crops, or even move outside of Oregon to stay in business. Farm employees are at risk of losing their jobs if downsizing, switching crops, or mechanizing are the only options available to a farm or ranch.

As a family business, we can't operate at a loss year-over-year, so we have to control costs that seem to increase every year in Oregon. I know it's not the goal of this bill to reduce employee take-home pay, but HB 2358 demands wages that are not possible with the economics of agriculture and will result in reduced pay and hours for farm employees.

I am very concerned that this policy hasn't been well-vetted and will actually harm those it intends to help. Those who want the bill have not even done an analysis of how much this will cost!

Please oppose HB 2358 this session. This bill will negatively impact not only family farmers and ranchers in Oregon, but also agricultural workers!